



NO. 68
AUG '00

GRAND GUIGNOL: 7

STARMAN



ROBINSON
2000

ROBINSON
SNEJBJERG

From the journals
of Simon Culp...

It's **bright** outside
and the City...Opal
...is **thrivin'** with
life.

But the **good** of this
was that Dick Swift,
the Shade, 'as 'imself
a kip ovva daytime.
Weak, tired, **sleepy**
e'is n'all.

Means I'm **up** to
write n'reflect.
Means I'm **free**.

Me **plan**...I think I
left **off** me journal
at that point...me
plan for the **downfall**
of Dickie Swift through
the destruction ov
Opal, 'is 'ome.

I've **covered** what
led up to that.

The feud o'hate
n'**darkness** we'd
fought since our
mutual **creation**
as beings o'shadow.

The **time** we fought
in England as 'itler's
bombs fell about us.
'Ow one bomb fell
dead on...

...**Fusin'** me form wivvin
that'o ol'Dickie...only **free**
to walk out in the Shade's
form on the **odd** times such
as this.

N'ow...walking about
I'd 'ave meself a **good**
old think o'ways I might
do Dickie **dirt** even as
I stole his long strides
as me own.

I **studied**. I planned.
Plotted. N'all the while
Dick Swift never knew
none o' it.

It began with me dippin'
into Dickie's own **books**
on Opal's history. N'sure
as sure is, one thing caught
me eye...

Grand Guignol
Septieme Partie

A Villain's Tale II

ROBINSON - writer
SNEJBURG - artist
OAKLEY - letterer
WRIGHT - colorist
JAMISON - seps
WILLIAMS - assistant ed.
TOMASI - editor
GOODWIN - guiding light

Jack Knight created
by Robinson & Harris



Swashbuckler name
o'Jon Valor. The
Black Pirate 'e
was known as.



Got 'isself 'ung for the murder
ov'is son by the folks o'Port
O'Souls...that which'd grow
t'one day **become** Opal City.

He claimed 'e
was **innocent**
...course, show
me a cove who's
gallows **bound**
didn't.



Difference with Valor...'e
cursed the folks at his death
for not believin' 'im.



I SHALL WALK
THIS BURG UNTIL THE
TRUTH AND MY INNOCENCE
ARE BOTH BROUGHT TO
LIGHT. YOU SHALL SEE ME IN
THE FLICKER OF CANDLELIGHT.
YOU SHALL HEAR MY BOOTS,
AND THE CREAK OF THEIR
FOOTFALL.

AND AS YOU DIE, SO YOU
ALL WILL WALK WITH ME. THROUGH
THE STREETS AND DALES OF THIS
LAND AROUND. **NONE** TO KNOW
PEACE UNTIL I SHARE IT
WITH YOU.

Caught me as
funny, that...



The folks o' **then**...the
folks o' Opal **now**...
none ov'em who died
allowed to go to the
great 'ereafter.



Generation after generation
o'spirit folk **all** doomed to
stay **stuck** 'ere.

I **dabble** in the black arts,
me. Didn't make more'n a
moment to think 'ow I
might **use** ol'Valor's hate
to **aid** me own.



Opal grew from the Port O'Souls.
Grew and 'ad the odd feel to it for
much ov'its time.

Where it was...East n'yet
inland just enough...

...bit o'the Eastern city to
it...bit o' the frontier town.
Suited some. Brian Savage
to name but one.

Dick, when he first come...
1882...I think it was Opal's
"not sure which is whatness"
that 'e liked enough to venture
back again n'again until the
day 'e stayed for good.

1909 was the year o'the
"great expansion." The
year that Opal made its
mind up.

It was a city. A big
city gettin' bigger.

'Ad itself a look, too. A
genius' vision o'what
the cities ov'tomorrow
would be like.

Palomar St. John
was 'is name.

Forward thinkin'.

Forward buildin'.

N'madder n'a march 'are.

St. John was inspired by n'architect o'old. **Nicholas 'awksmoor**.

'Im who designed a **good** few of the **churches** 'round London in the time 'fore I was even the dregs of me ol'mum's gin glass.

Six churches to be exact... **Funny**...one of 'em was **St. Annes** in **Limehouse** ...the place 'at played such a part in me 'nd Dickie gettin' our shadow.

'Awksmoor's designs were in keepin' with **that** time. "Gothic" I suppose the word is. Baroque. Though I've **not** much **use** for the word, me.

Nothing "New Opal" 'bout it, though.

But it weren't the 'awksmoor design of an eave or cornice that got St. John all 'ot n'bothered.

Rumor is 'at 'awksmoor was a **pagan**...at a time when paganism was still about hiding on the shadows of Christianity's pious good stead.

'awksmoor weren't about to design houses for a god he didn't 'ave no desire to **shake** the 'and of, so he **christened** all them 'allowed 'alls in **human blood**.

Made 'em 'omes of **old** gods long 'fore the preists and 'igh-holy fathers got all **comfy** in the pews. N'the **sacrifices**...the **churches** ...locations **linked** up ...formed on 'igh into a pentagram.

Or so they say.


St. John **liked** the sound o' that...liked the **practice** n'all.

He christened the '**ole** bleedin' **city** in the blood o'innocents...

Five sacrifices 'e made, **different** locations ...not **just** churches...**formin'** the shape ovva five-sided star.

(Seems Opal and stars are **born** t'be bedfellows.)





Next bit o'interest to me was from Dickie's own **journal** account ov'n exploit Ted Knight 'ad in 'is youth.

Fought a bunch o'**Nazis** ...arcane they was...**quick** with the spells n'exes.

Planned to send Opal to a void **dimension**...n'empty place o'**nothin'**.

Big enough to take a city, though.

The rite was **almost** complete when the Starman o'**then** n'a **demon** all big n'red-yellow put paid to it.

Thing I learned, though...the demon **weren't** nice enough. 'e took the time to **undo** what there was o'the rite had **already** been done.

N'Ted Knight was a man o'**science**. He **didn't** know enough t'**know**.

So **there** it was...a empty dimension with the **door** to it all set up and waiting for someone with the **key**.

It wasn't me
opened it.

You'd **think**, I know, but
I was **smarter** n'at. Like
to **think** so at least.

I contacted a bunch of
coves...cult...occult cult
...lots to be found if'n
you **know** where to look.

The **Wise Fools** they
called 'emselves. Even
though I 'ad the Shade's
body I disguised it so
they wouldn't recognize
me. N'I told'em I could
deliver the world.

I gave'em a means to
recreate me **shadow**.

They thought they was on
the road to **greatness**.

Thing is...or was...I'd **already**
alerted Dr. Fate of their antics.
Who I **figured**...based on
everything 'e knew...shadow
power involved n'all... would
go to the **Shade**.

I let my involvement be known.
"**Culp**" that is...me **real** name.
That got Dickie in the ring with
'is boxing gloves laced and 'is
fists up 'igh.

They fought the Wise Fools.
Beat'em **easy**.

The thing Dickie 'ad a
problem with was me
shadow. It wasn't 'is,
you see. Each man's
shadow matter is as
different as 'is palm.

'e couldn't **dissipate**
it. 'e couldn't **absorb**
it.

So Fate **opened** up the
void dimension...(I'd
revealed its existence
when I revealed me plans
to Fate)...n'e **consigned**
me shadow there.

N'there it stayed...
to grow and breed
and gain a strength
not o this earth.

Exactly as I planned.

Why didn't I send 'em me
shadow there meself?
'Cause for me to send
it there required sendin'
a little of **Dickie's** own
shadow to **guide** it
through.

'is shadow...forced to merge
n'meld with mine...would make
what grew there all the **stronger**
for its state o'turmoil.

N'so **another** piece of me pretty
puzzle slotted in right nicely.

It was around then... maybe a bit later... I begun me recruitment.

First cove I picked up was a bit ovva surprise even for old Culpy, me who knows surprise like a bruvver.

Talk is as was that Rag Doll was "toes up" on account a'bad turn of luck with some costumed 'eroes.

E'begged to differ.

SO WHAT'S THE DEAL?

A FAIR SPLIT OF THE LOOT. THAT PLUS WHATEVER EXTRA YOUR FOLLOWERS CAN SNATCH WILL MAKE YOU HAPPY FOR A WHILE.

I MIGHT AGREE TO THIS. I'M NOT SURE. I'M USED TO LEADING, NOT BEING A FOLLOWER.

CALL THIS A WARM-UP FOR WHATEVER DRAMAS YOU MIGHT WANT TO STAGE YOURSELF. YOU'VE BEEN OUT OF IT A WHILE.

YES. THANKS TO TED KNIGHT.

THEY THOUGHT ME DEAD. I THINK PERHAPS I WAS FOR A MINUTE OR TWO. BUT I WASN'T READY FOR WHATEVER COMES WITH DEATH. NOT YET.

I HID OUT. OLD AND SPENT. STIFF.

YOU'D HARDLY KNOW IT LOOKING AT YOU.

I WAS APPROACHED. BY NERON. THIS WAS BACK WHEN NERON OFFERED VILLAINS NEW... GREATER POWER IN EXCHANGE FOR THEIR SERVICES.

HE OFFERED ME AN EXTENSION OF MY SKILLS FAR BEYOND THOSE I'D HAD EVEN IN MY PRIME. AND BETTER YET...



... HE
OFFERED ME
YOUTH.



WHY DIDN'T YOU MAKE
YOUR APPEARANCE THEN...
BACK THEN... DO NERON'S
BIDDING?

HE TOLD
ME TO STAY
HIDDEN.
AND TO AWAIT
YOU.



WHY?

HE
FORESAW THIS
DAY. HE WANTS
YOU TO WIN... TO
BEAT THE
SHADE.

AGAIN
I ASK
WHY?

I DUNNO...



YOU'LL
RUE THIS
DAY.

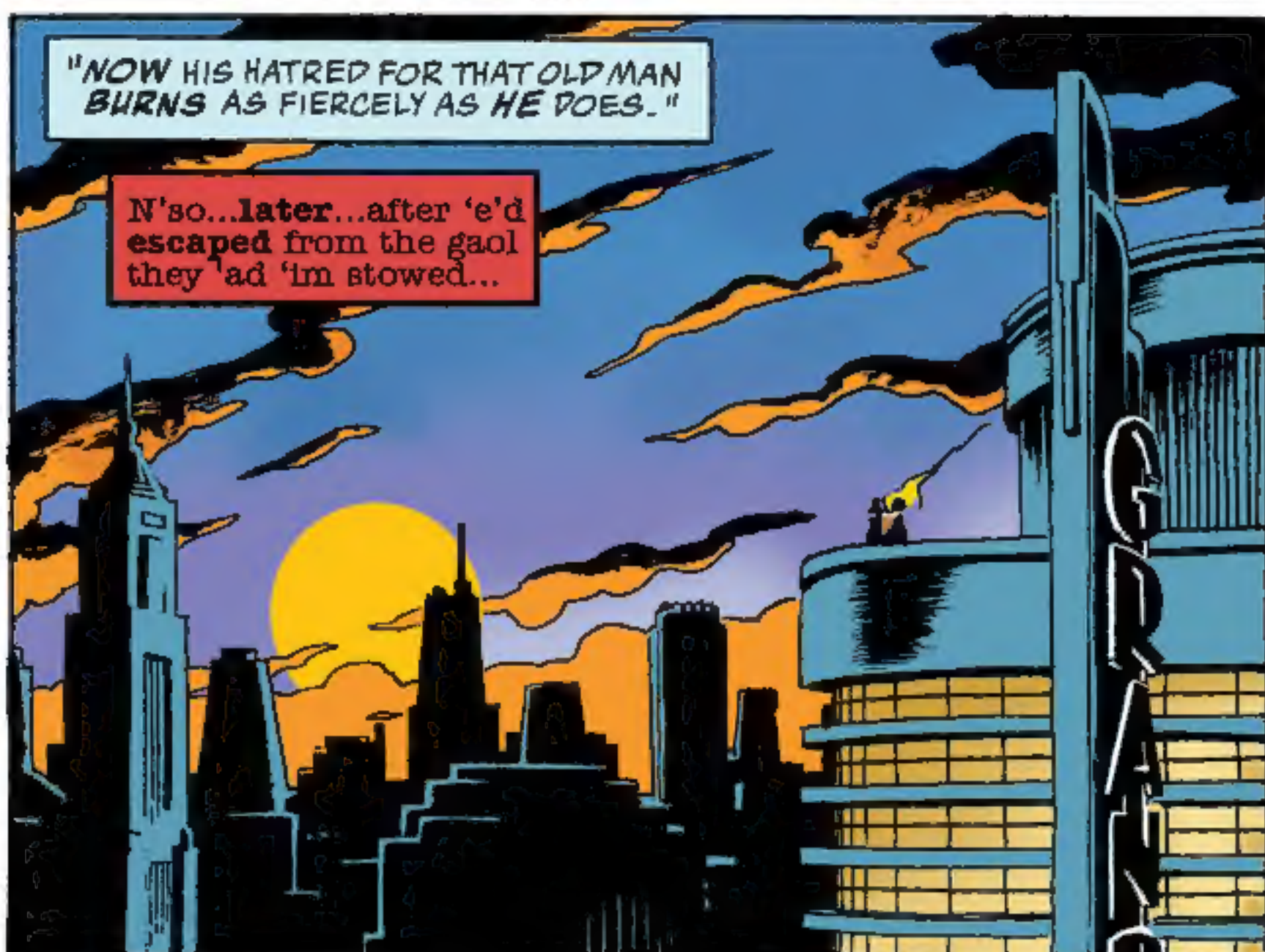
RUE? IF I HAD
A "RUE" FOR EVERY
TIME SOMEONE
SAID THAT...

...I'D OWN
PARIS.



I THINK THE SHADE *CROSSED*
HIM IN SOME WAY. MAYBE. ANYWAY,
YOU SHOULD *KNOW* THERE WERE TWO
OTHER VILLAINS LINKED TO STARMAN
AND OPAL WHO NERON
EMPOWERED.

ONE FOUGHT
TED KNIGHT
AND LOST.



"NOW HIS HATRED FOR THAT OLD MAN
BURNS AS FIERCELY AS HE DOES."

N'so...later...after 'e'd
escaped from the gaol
they 'ad 'im stowed...



I'M
IN.



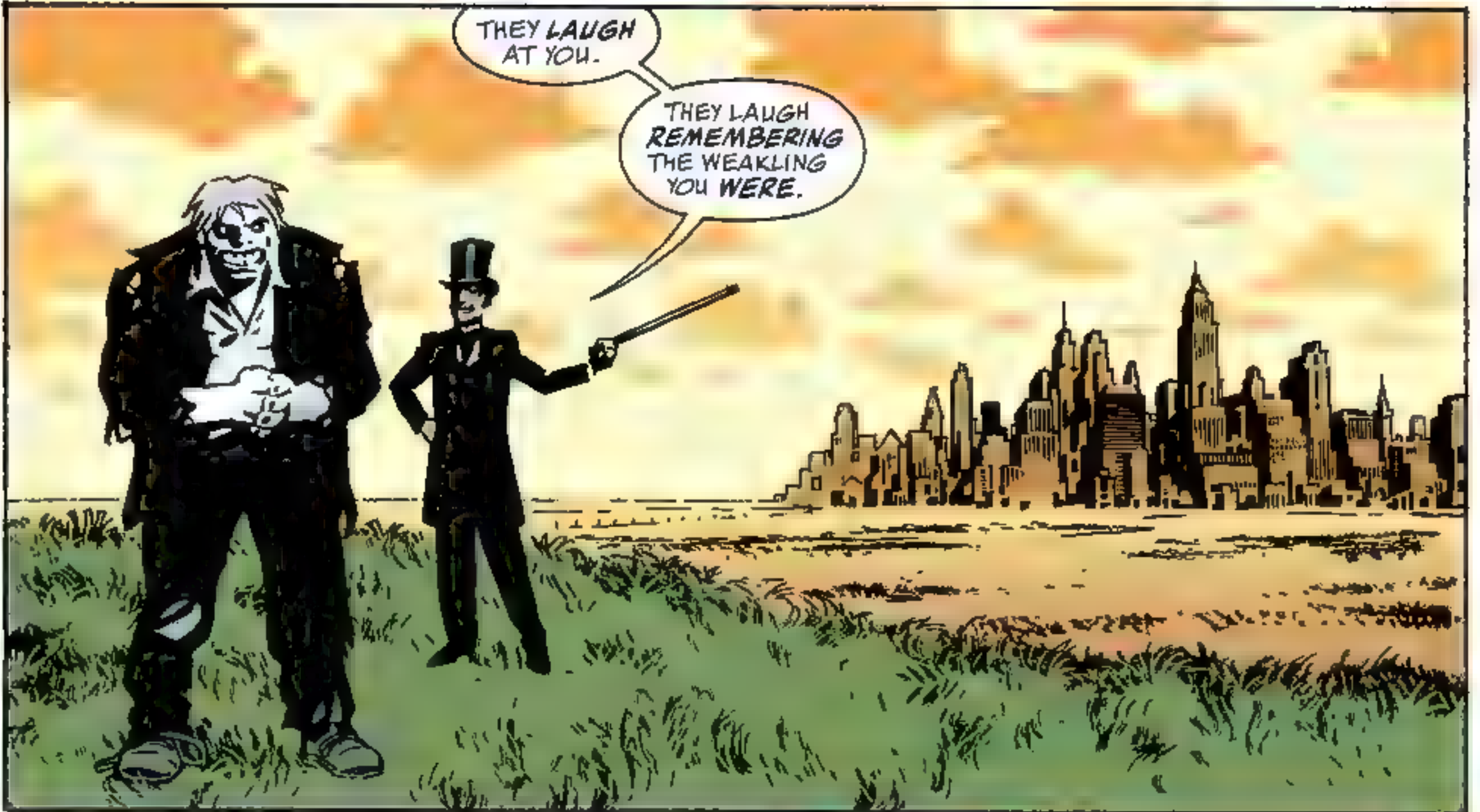


CRUSHER,
YOU'VE BEEN
A LOST SOUL.

YOU'VE
BEEN A
LONELY
SOUL.



I OFFER
YOU A HOME...
A GOAL...A
LIFE.

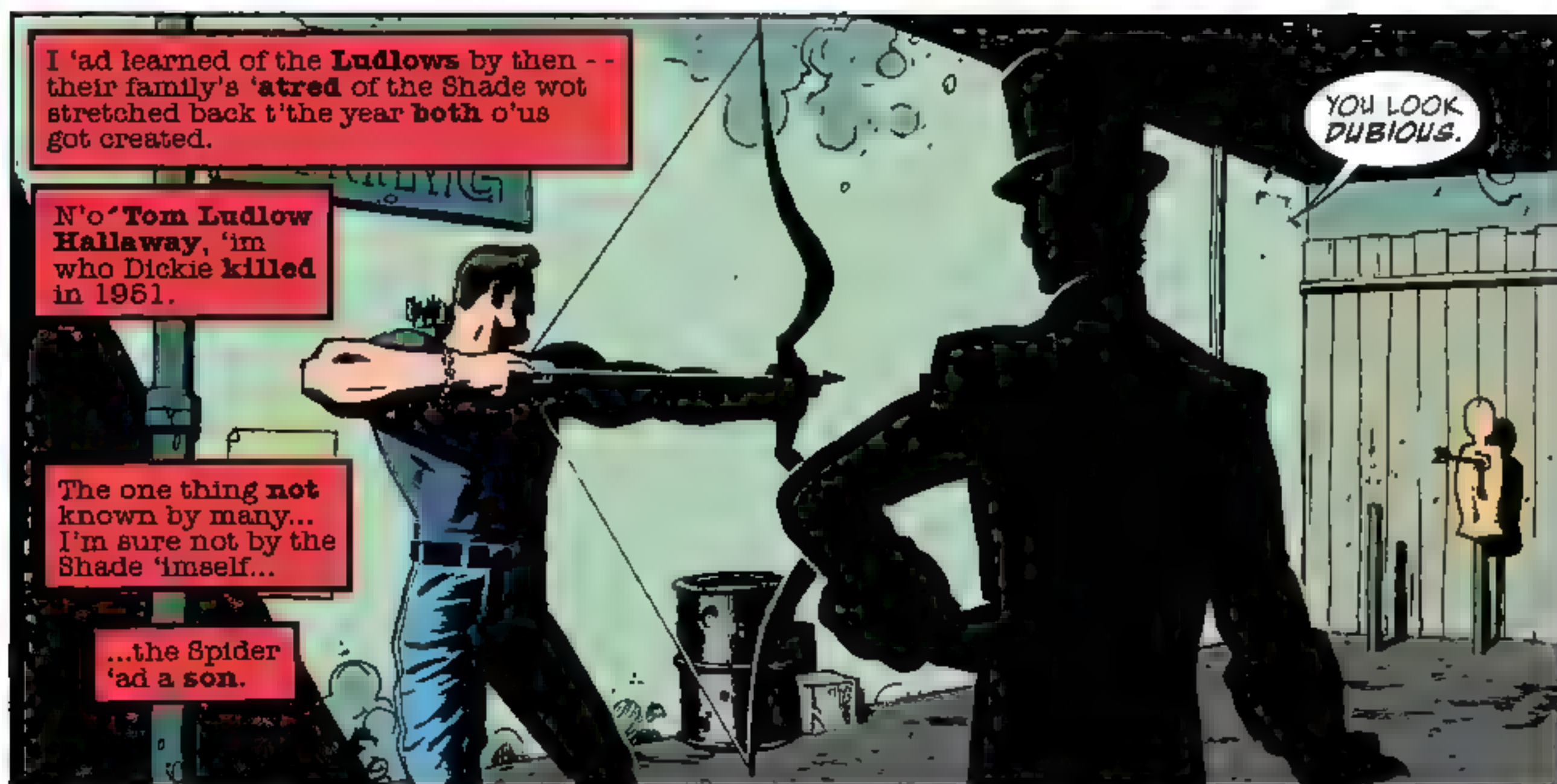


THEY LAUGH
AT YOU.

THEY LAUGH
REMEMBERING
THE WEAKLING
YOU WERE.



IT'S TIME
OPAL CITY
MET THE REAL
SOLOMON
GRUNDY.



I 'ad learned of the Ludlows by then -- their family's 'atred of the Shade wot stretched back t'the year both o'us got created.

N'o' Tom Ludlow Hallaway, 'im who Dickie killed in 1961.

The one thing not known by many... I'm sure not by the Shade 'imself...

...the Spider 'ad a son.

YOU LOOK DUBIOUS.

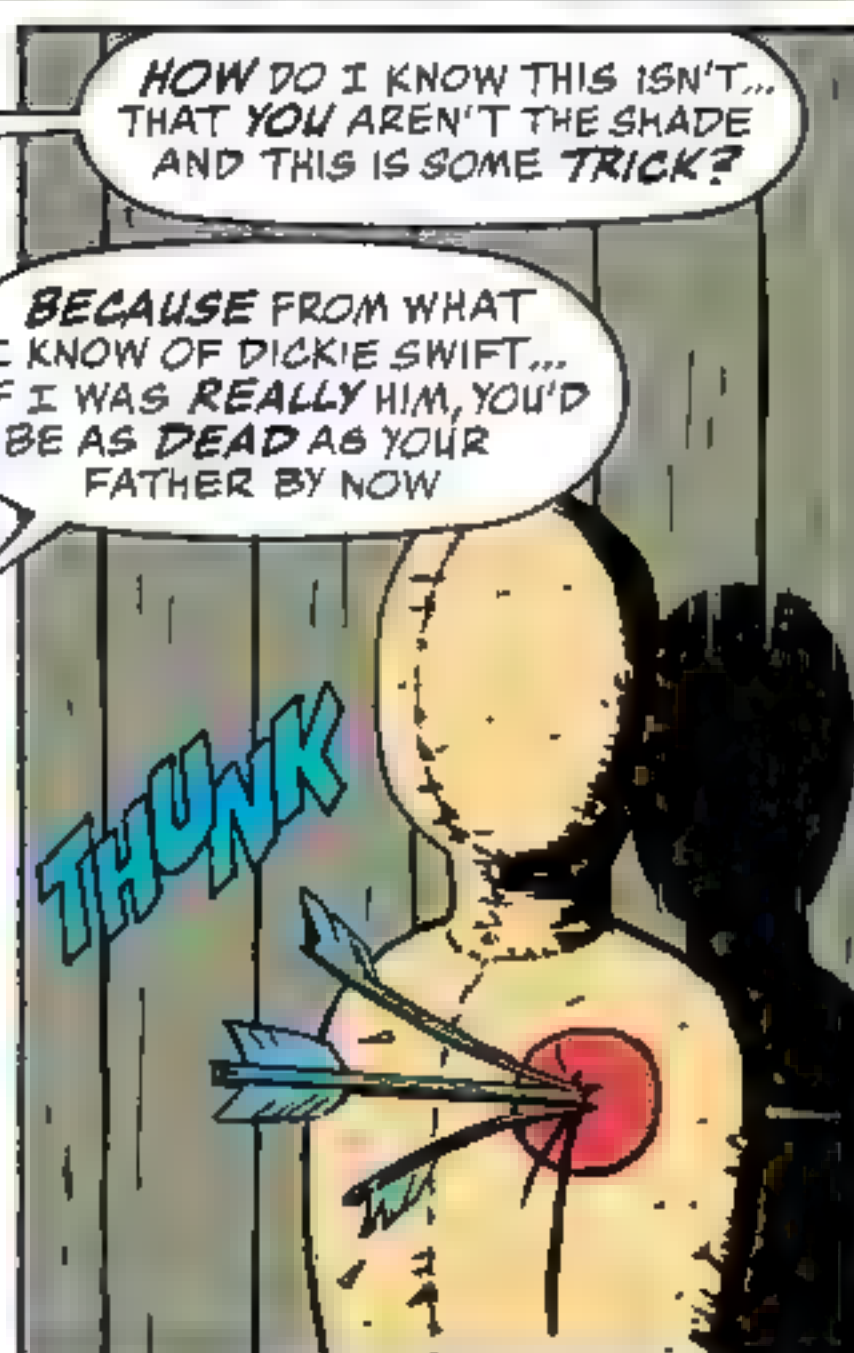


I AM.

MY FAMILY'S ENEMY APPROACHES ME... TELLS ME HE'S SOMEONE ELSE... A DWARF NAMED CULP.



HE OFFERS ME THE CHANCE TO HIT BACK AT THE SHADE... AVENGE MY FATHER AND THE LUDLOW NAME.



HOW DO I KNOW THIS ISN'T... THAT YOU AREN'T THE SHADE AND THIS IS SOME TRICK?

BECAUSE FROM WHAT I KNOW OF DICKIE SWIFT... IF I WAS REALLY HIM, YOU'D BE AS DEAD AS YOUR FATHER BY NOW

THUNK



STILL DUBIOUS?

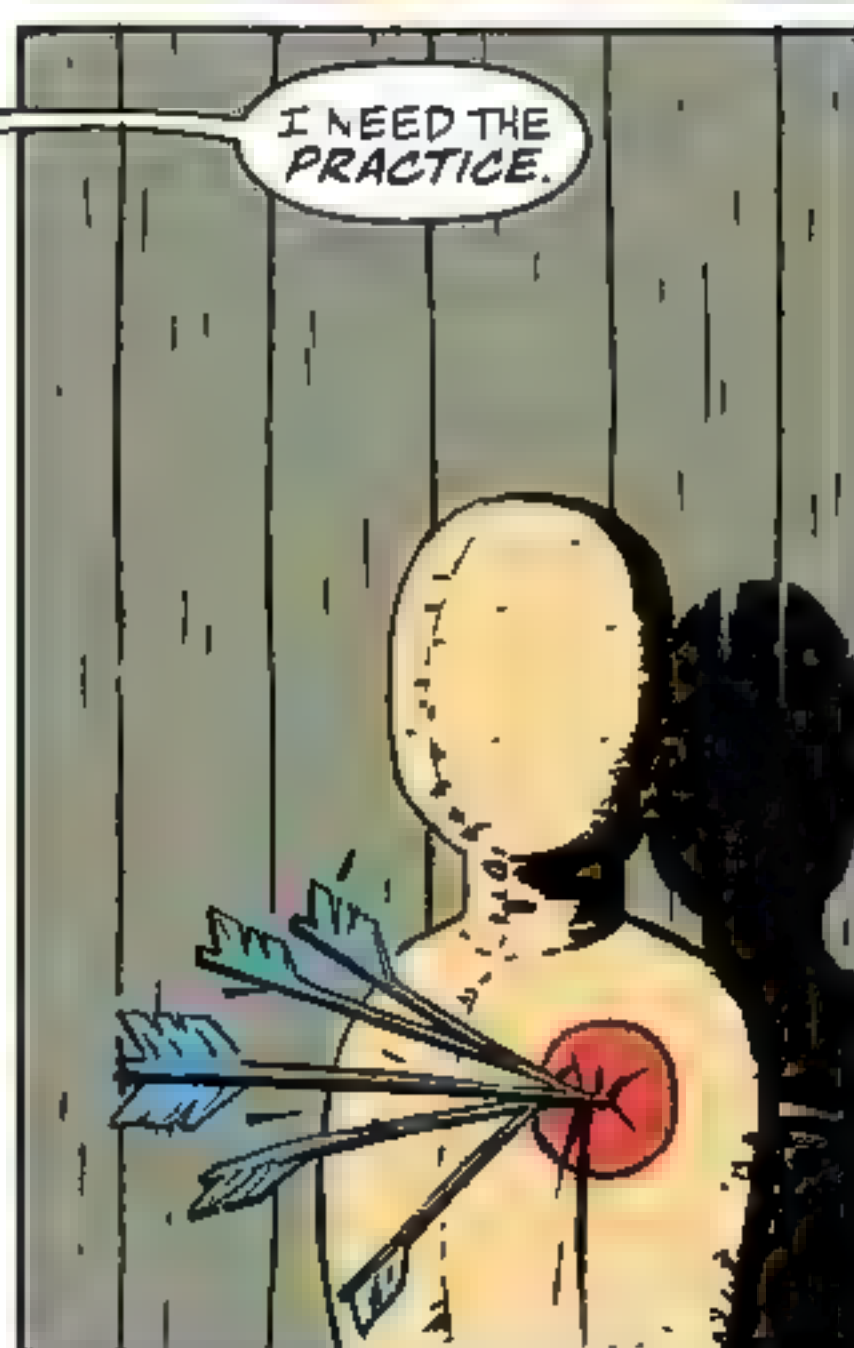
THE SHADE HAS PROVEN HARD TO KILL.

SO HAS SIMON CULP.

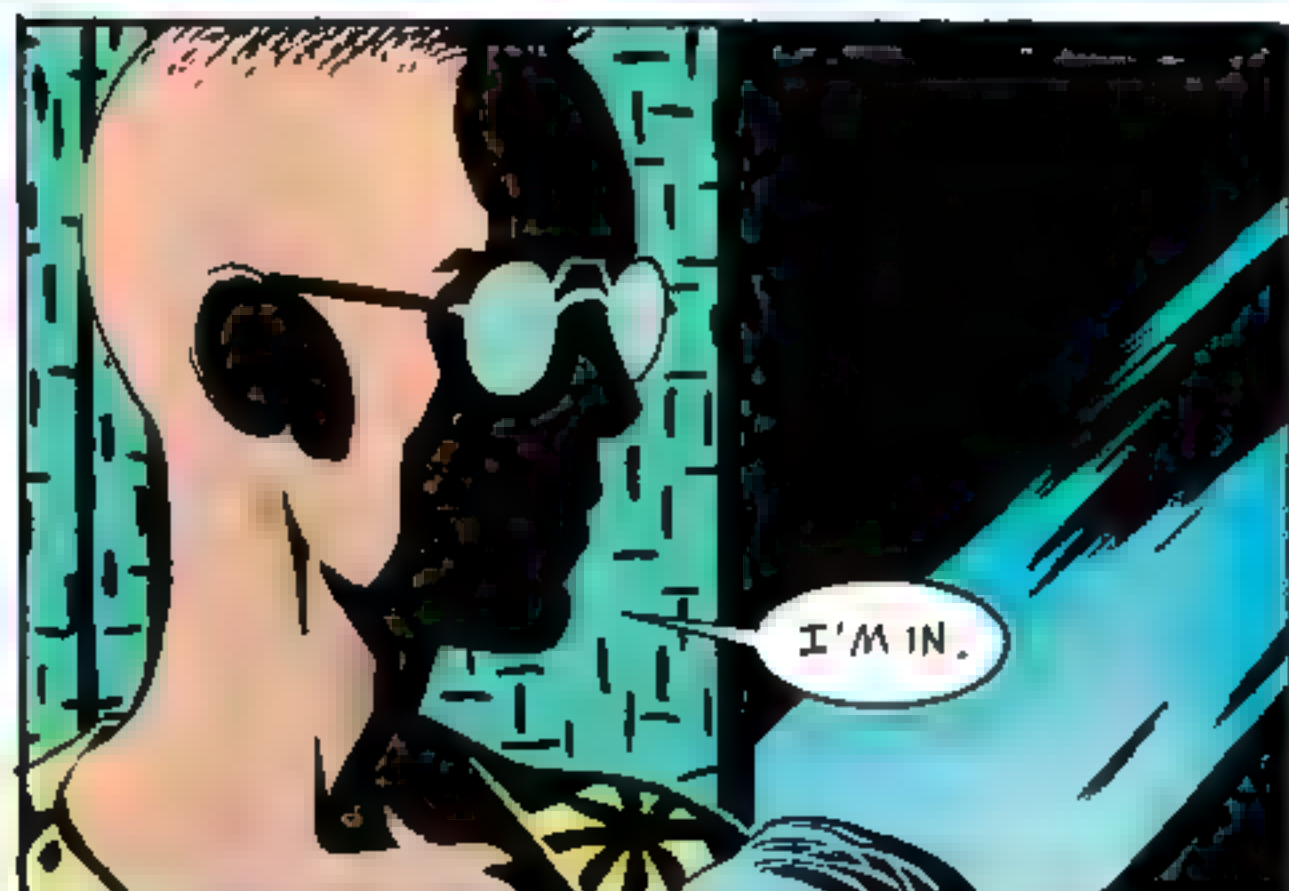
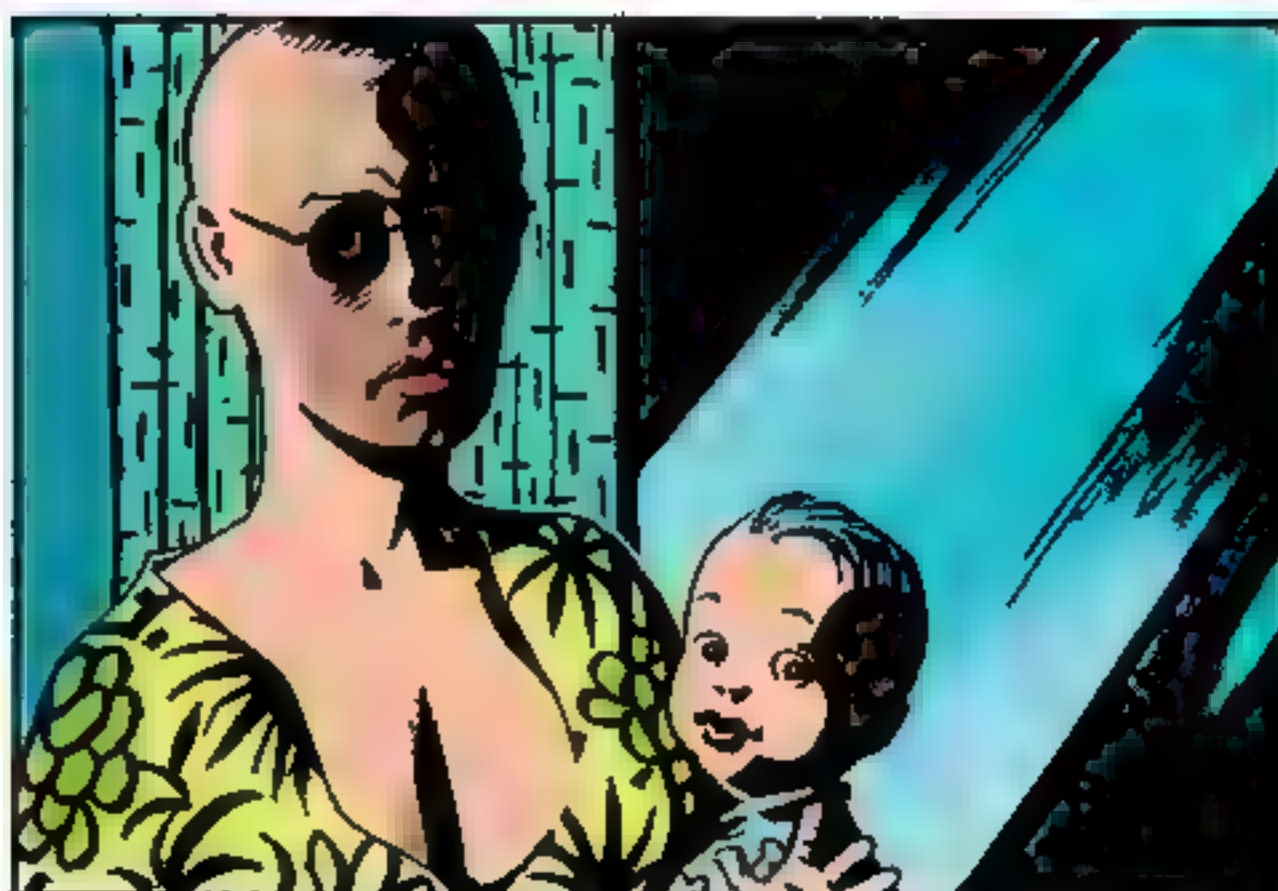
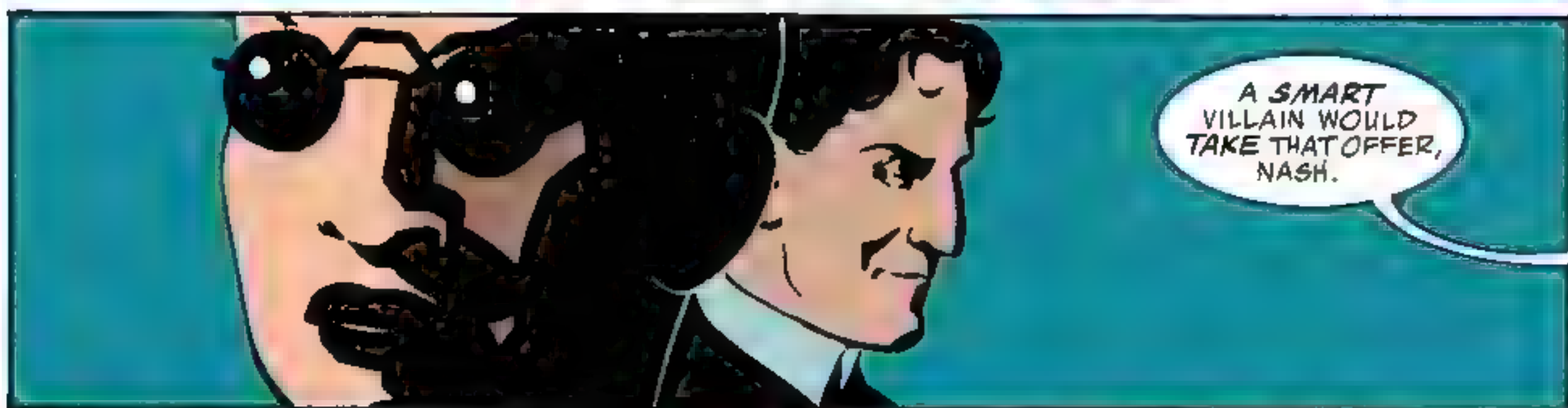
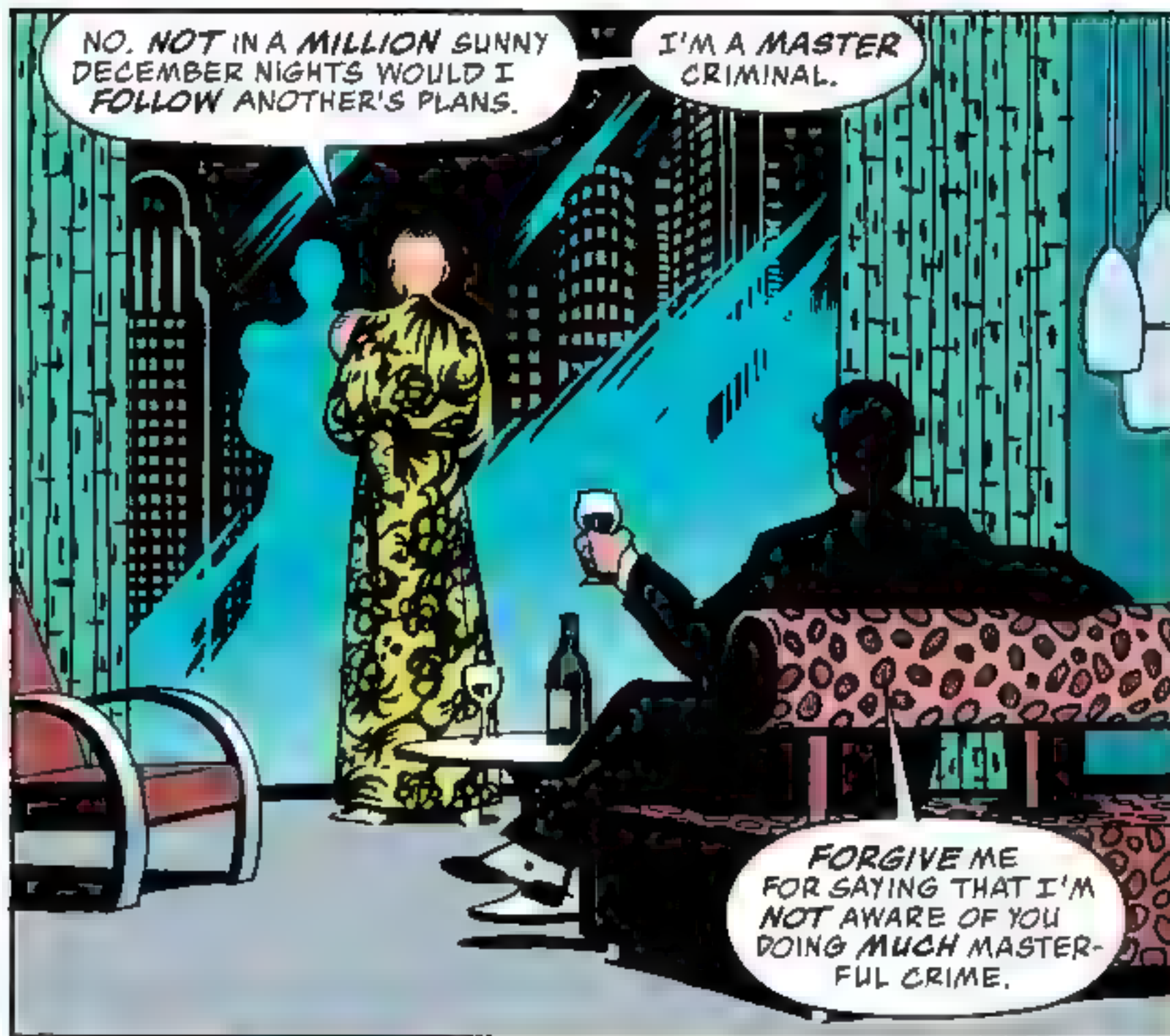
DOES THIS MEAN YOU'RE NOT IN?



NO, I'M IN.



I NEED THE PRACTICE.



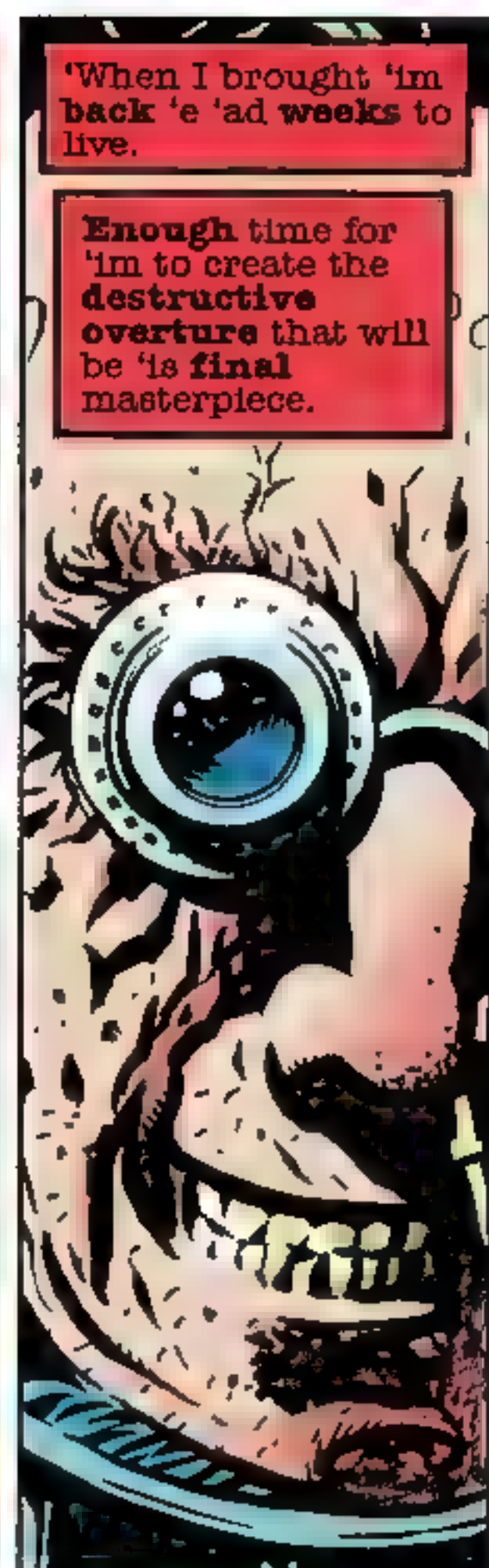


Me final recruit didn't get the chance to see 'is own 'andiwork...



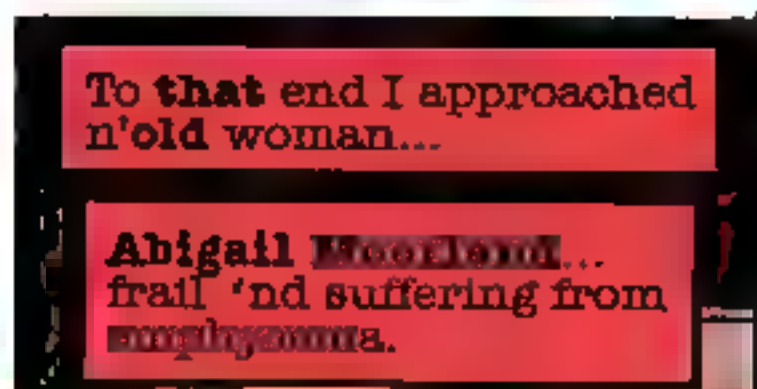
Dr. Pip...the Infernal Dr. Pip. I found 'im lost within the Shade's shadow.

'E'd been a dyin' man when 'e went there.



'When I brought 'im back 'e 'ad weeks to live.

Enough time for 'im to create the destructive overture that will be 'is final masterpiece.



To that end I approached n'old woman...

Abigail Woodfield... frail 'nd suffering from emphysema.

I was nevertheless impressed with 'er ability 'andlin' the black magic.



She 'ad at one time flown the Opal skies as the Prairie Witch, you see...

...but now all she wanted was the quiet life n'was more than 'appy to render advice in return for the price ovva few years'easy livin' in Florida.





It was 'er who bade me
refresh the sites of Saint
John's sacrifices...to further
strengthen me magic...
its 'old on Opal.

...Those murders bein' the
deaths that first drew the
Shade under the Opal rozzers'
watchful gaze.



And 'ere
we are.

Soon we'll
begin.

Soon Opal City'll
burn.

Soon I will create the spell
combinin' me shadow in the
void dimension with Opal
City's long restrained spirit
matter which will keep all
and everyone outside from
'elping the city within.

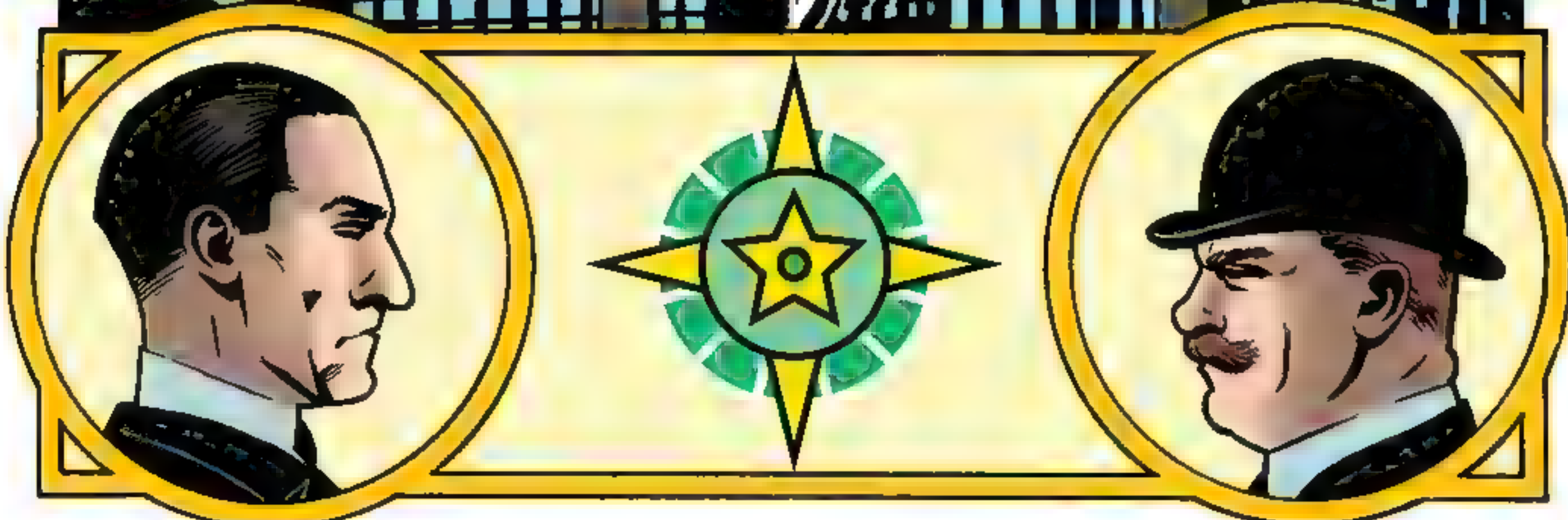
Soon Opal City will go
for good. Down further
into the shadow Into
the void.

Soon.



Oh, Dickie
Swift...

If you could but
see the smile on
your face right
now.





It was the winter of '11.

The snows had yet to fall as they did every year in Jay Town, and so the city was gripped with a vague sense of expectancy.

I too felt expectant, although not for winter white or the December holidays they bore our way.

My life was a stew, the kind you find on the stove in the back street ale houses. Poorly made, flavorless, and without much meat.

I had opened my legal offices in 1908, having finally recovered from my injuries fighting alongside Teddy Roosevelt in Panama. And in those three years since had found myself lost in the law.

But not the grisly, glorious end of law's rainbow where crime and sensation alide.

My world was one of petty writs and divorce trials. A sad, grimy place.

And so I entered 1911's final month hoping for something new. Indeed, some deep, hidden place within me expected it.



My club, "The Groves," was an odd mixture of members. No one sterling. No clubman ever drew celebrity notices in the Jay Town Herald.

A stuffy enclave of stale leather and coughing.

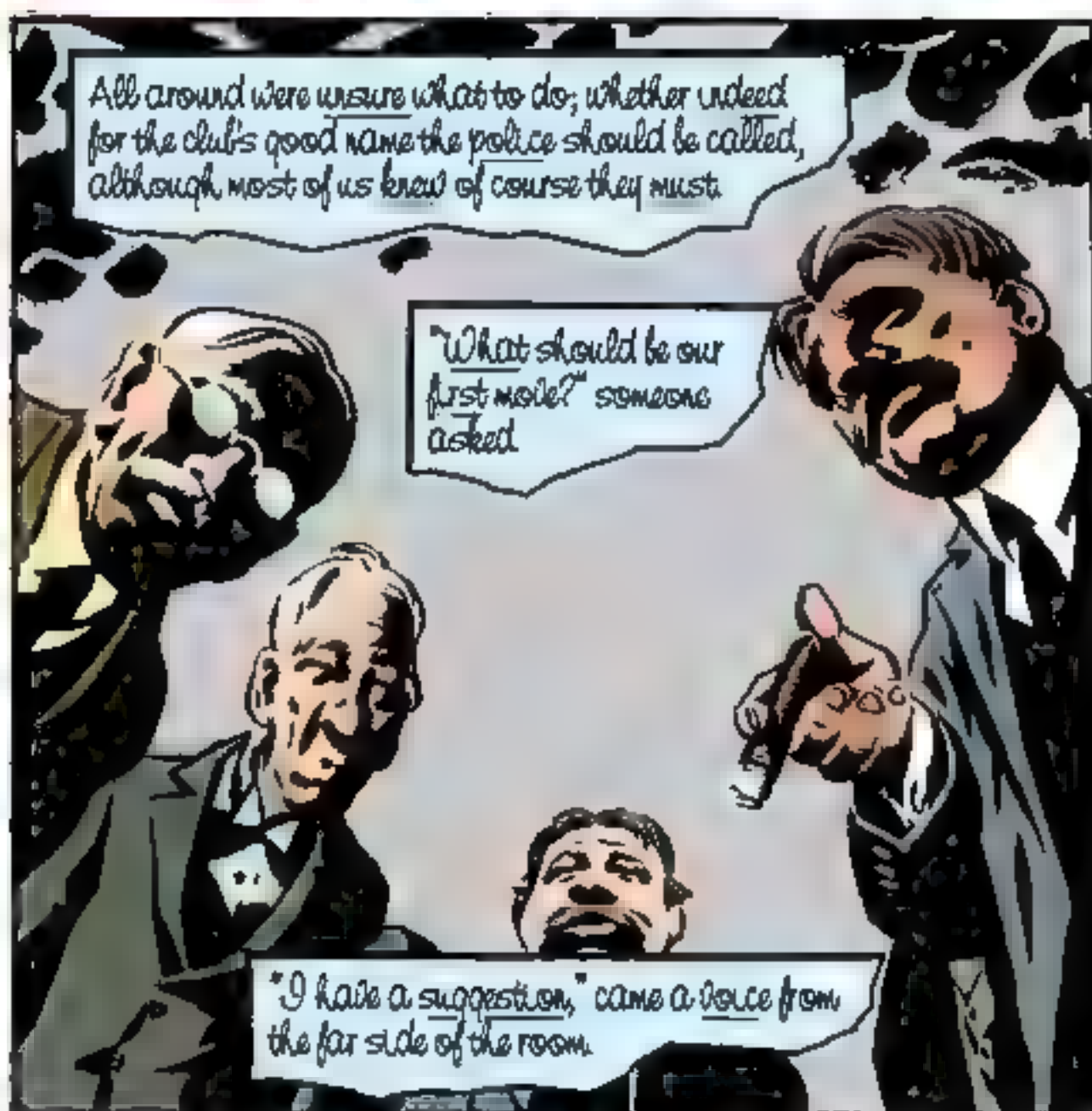
This, like my unrewardful life, was about to change.



Donaldson Redgrave, a land developer, suddenly became apoplectic, writhing in his seat without a care for his port wine and robusto, both of which were thrown high and far.

Then, as other clubmen and I gathered...

...a chimpanzee burst forth from his chest, killing him instantly.



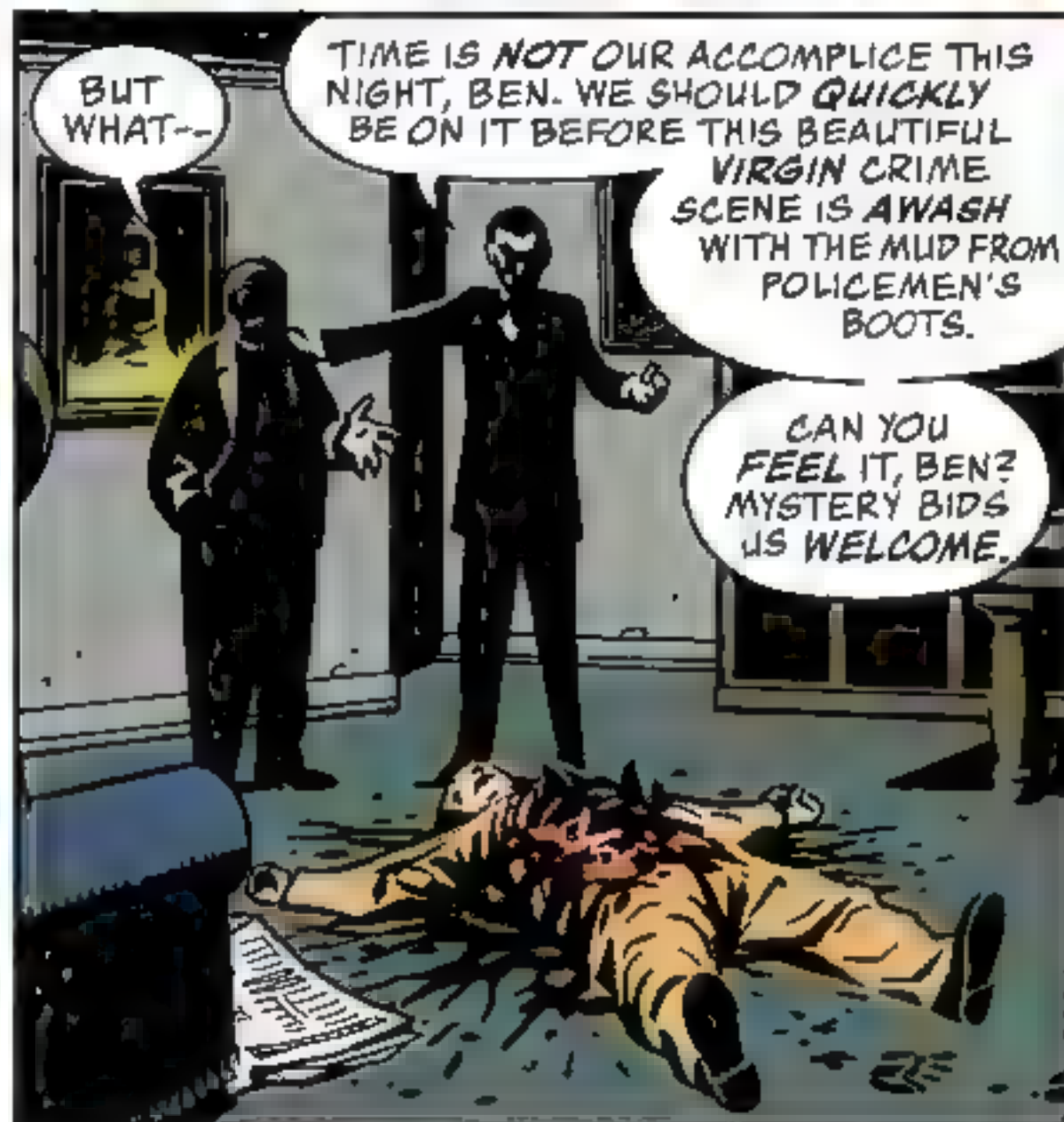
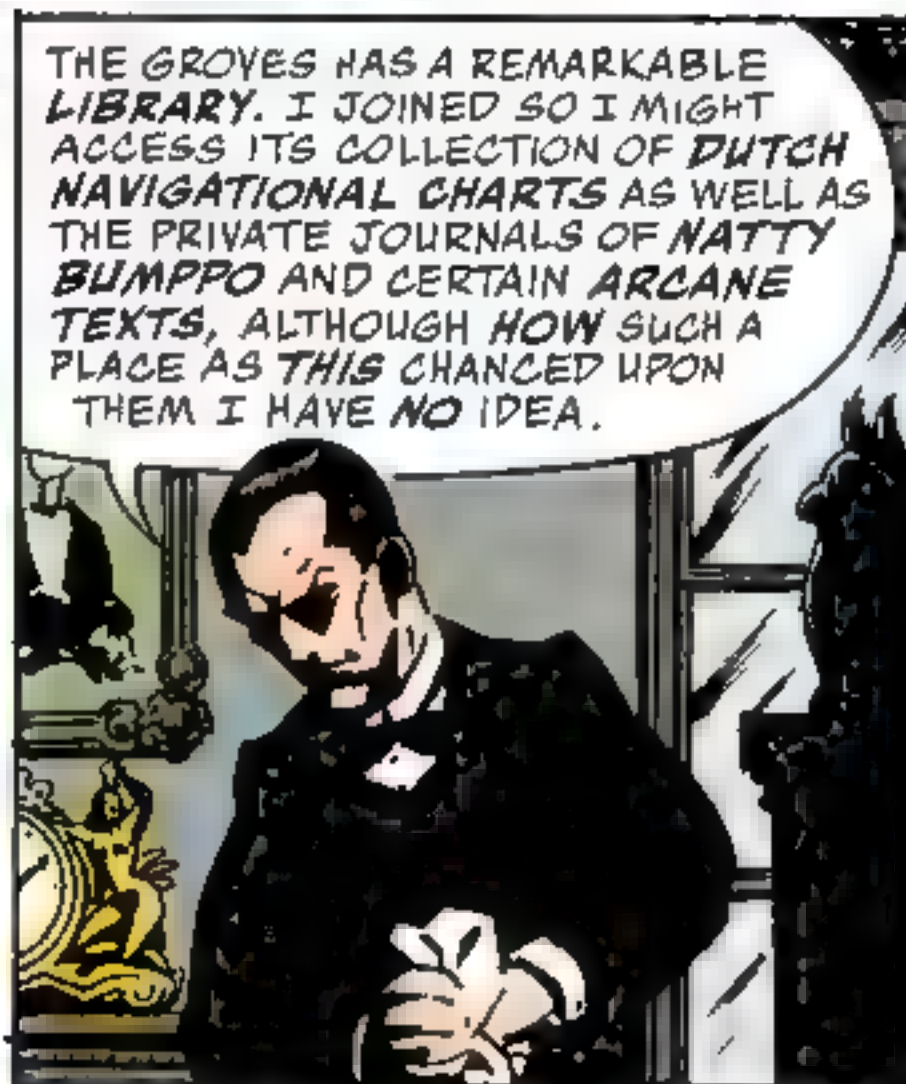
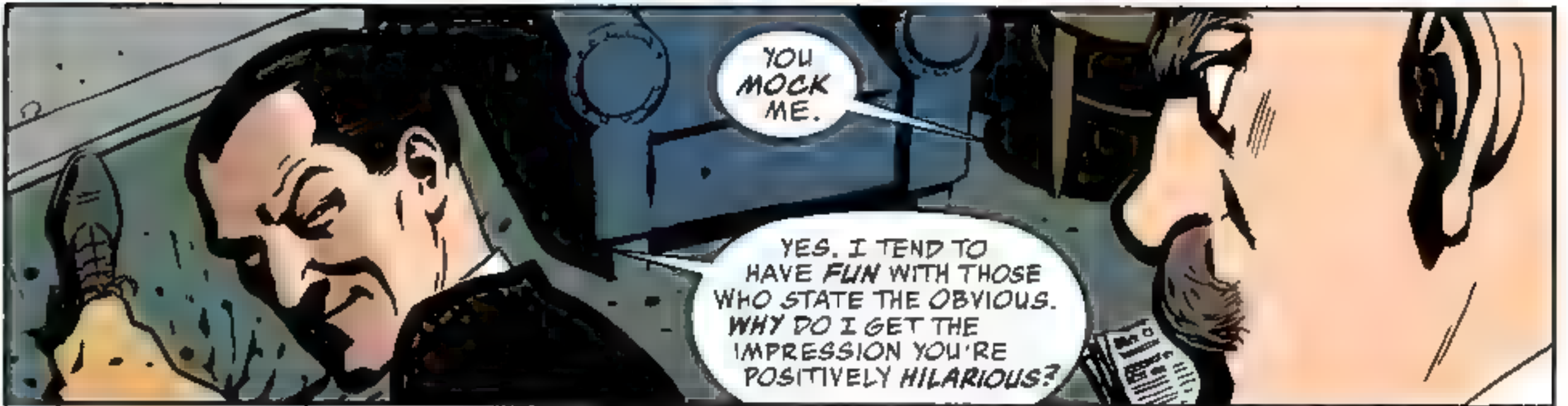
All around were unsure what to do; whether indeed for the club's good name the police should be called, although most of us knew of course they must.

"What should be our first move?" someone asked.

"I have a suggestion," came a voice from the far side of the room.



**A Great Man Recalled...
And Recollecting**

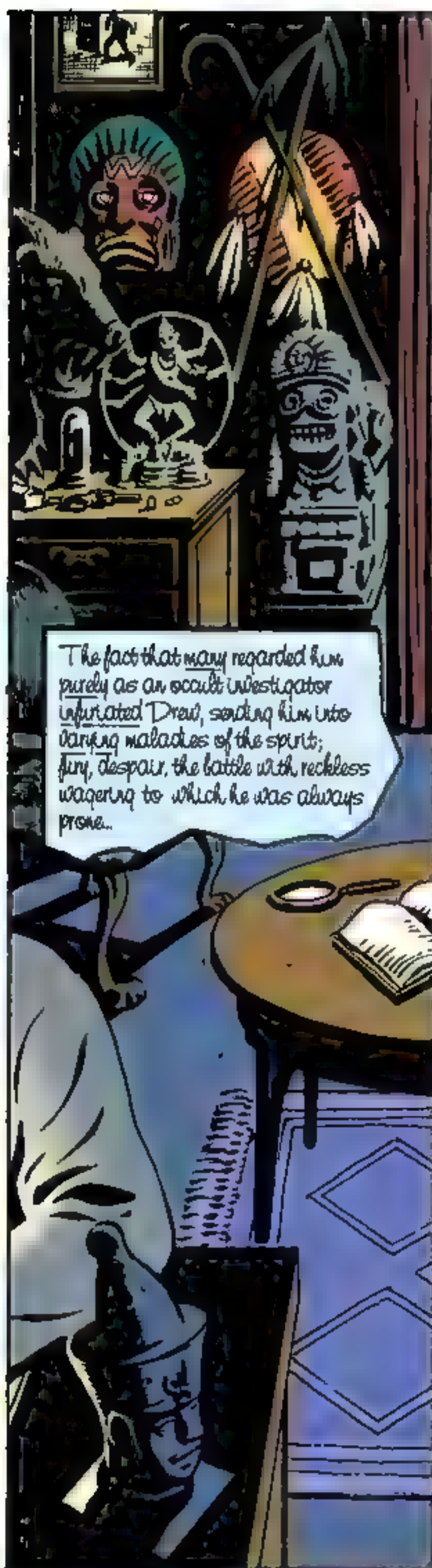




...an exploit I would later recall, record and regale the readers of "Strange Adventures Magazine" as...

"The Exploit of the Sunan Slayers"

There was an occult element to this case, and although Drew solved other such cases involving the other-worldly, I know he prefers crimes rooted in the earthly and explainable.



The fact that many regarded him purely as an occult investigator infuriated Drew, sending him into varying maladies of the spirit; fury, despair, the battle with reckless warring to which he was always prone...



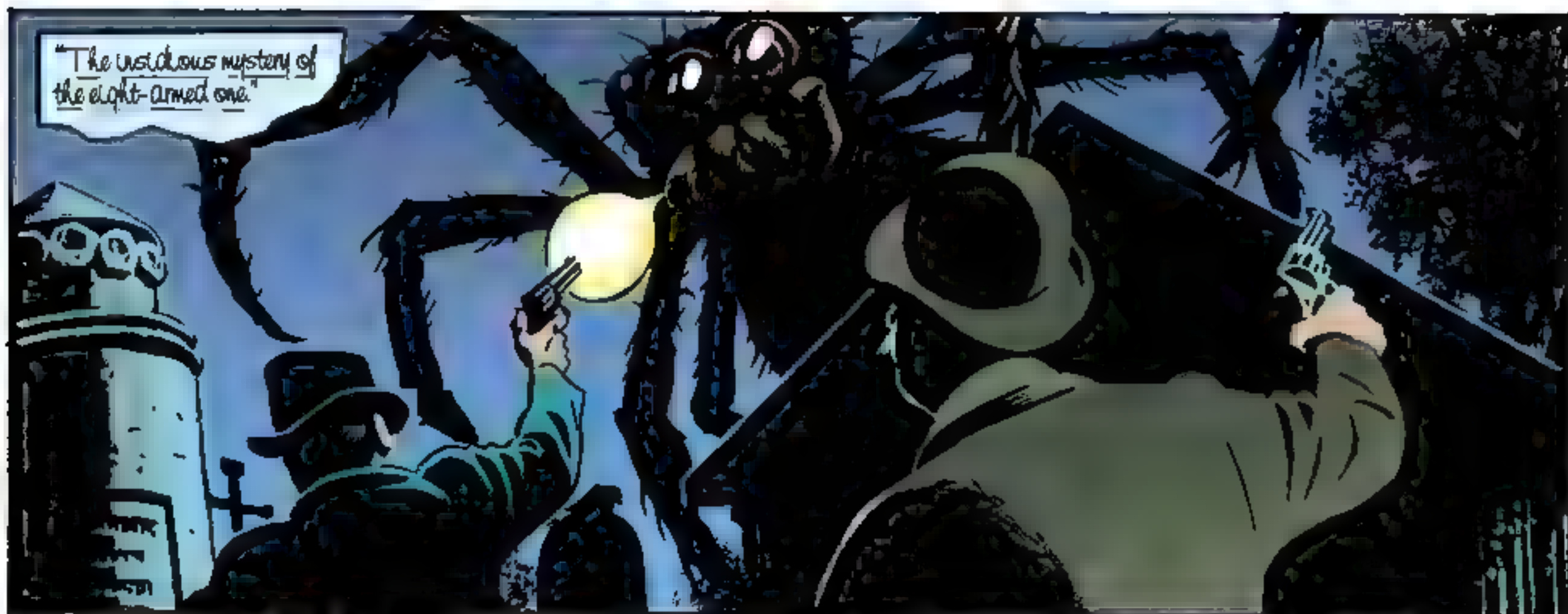
...and his music, these melodic fancies upon his flute that were to the listener more a boon than not compared to the other symptoms of Drew's unhappiness.

It was unfortunate that of the hundreds of cases I witnessed as Drew's friend and colleague, it was the few exceptions featuring ghosts, demons and their ilk that captured the public's attention.



Indeed, upon reflection, how many such cases readily spring to mind?

"The reality of Dr Varnay's specter"



"The unsolved mystery of the eight-armed one."



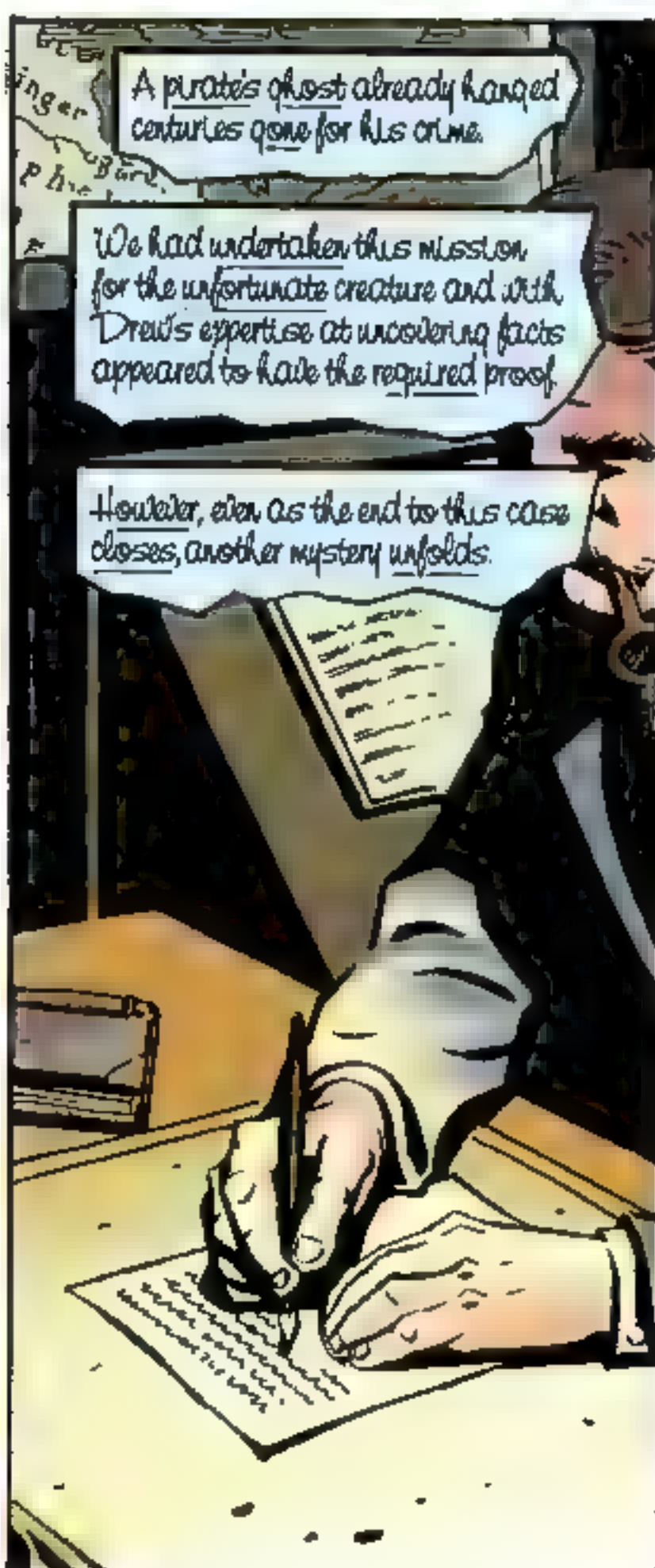
"The adventure of the cross-leaver sightings."

Which else? Which else?



Of course it is with some irony that as I write this two such arcane adventures way upon us.

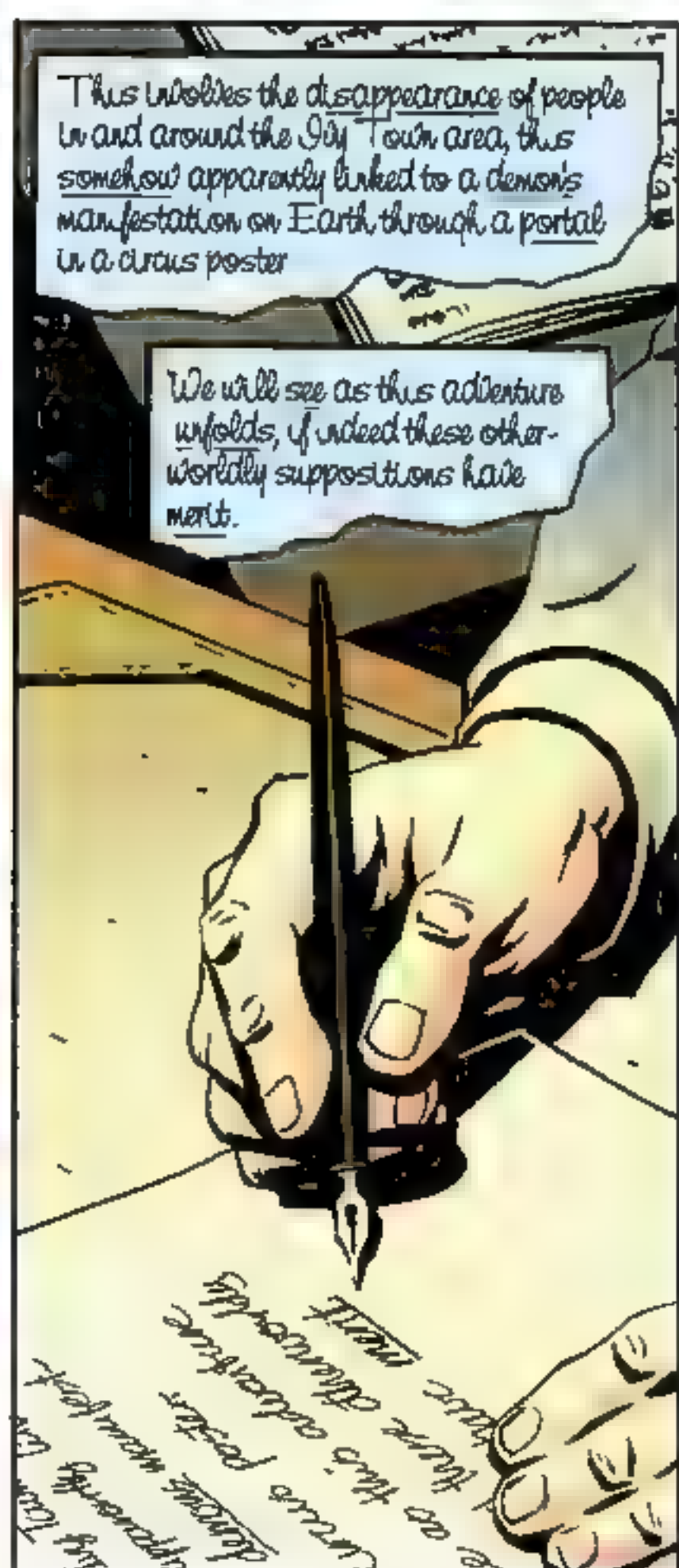
Although one is actually a simple matter of proving the innocence of a condemned man, the singular aspect is the accused man himself.



A pirate's ghost already hanged centuries gone for his crime.

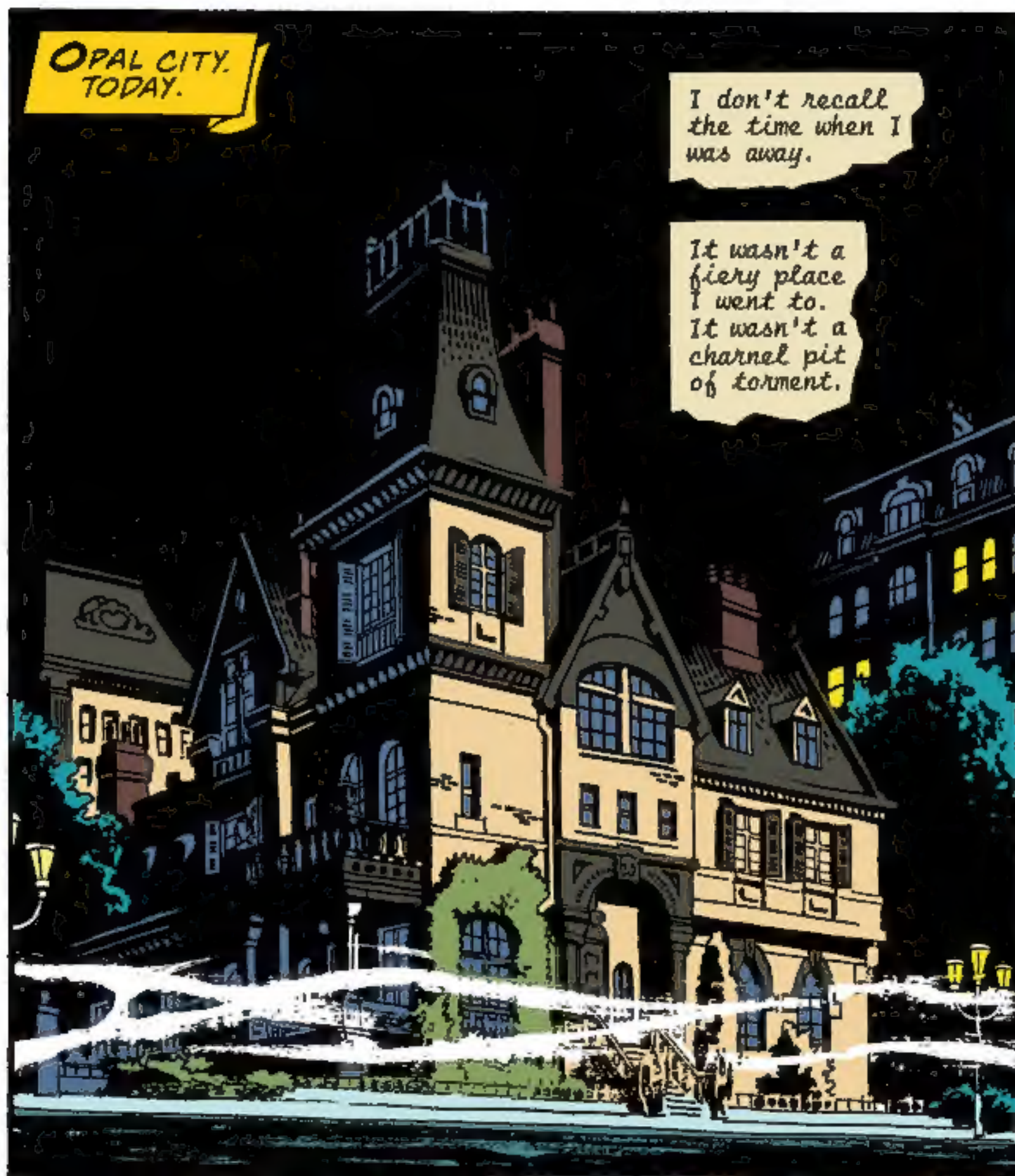
We had undertaken this mission for the unfortunate creature and with Drew's expertise at uncovering facts appeared to have the required proof.

However, even as the end to this case closes, another mystery unfolds.



This involves the disappearance of people in and around the Jay Town area, thus somehow apparently linked to a demon's manifestation on Earth through a portal in a circus poster.

We will see as this adventure unfolds, if indeed these other-worldly suppositions have merit.



OPAL CITY.
TODAY.

I don't recall
the time when I
was away.

It wasn't a
fiery place
I went to.
It wasn't a
charnel pit
of torment.



Apparently I went to Hell,
but I felt nothing...
nothing at all. Perhaps
that is my Hell at that.



Chester

I returned
to Earth to
discover it
changed.



I recall those who returned
with me... The poster-demon's
other countless victims all
from different eras... their
fear and sadness learning the
life they knew was no more.

U.S. CITIZENS
→



I had had but one friend, Ben Luddy. It was with much sadness I discovered his sorry fate...A madhouse...his mind unhinged from witnessing my apparent infernal demise.

Now sadness is my ally.
My talents seem antiquated. Novel and modern in a time when Lindbergh performed miracles.

Now, in the face of computerization and criminologists' techniques I cannot begin to fathom, I am a dinosaur.

I find favor in melancholy.

Ivy Town had changed so. Too much, and yet as much was familiar and the pain of yesterdays was agony.

Instead I settled in Opal, a place which in many ways retains the feel and look of the city I visited often.

And it seemed apt somehow to be here, where my savior... the young man with the starlight abides.



Grand Guignol Neuvieme Partie

The heroes regroup. The villains ransack Opal. The Spider and Shade exchange polite conversation. And Ted Knight remembers the night a woman wore the green and red of Starman recalling events from All Star Comics # 15 in

**HEROES REBORN, RENEWED
...AND REMEMBERED.**



Deadman Wade

"THIS IS WHAT
AWESOME
LOOKS LIKE".

DCP